

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 9856

LUSAKA FOR MC HENRY AND MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, RQ, AS, NO
SUBJECT: PUERTO RICO; CONVERSATION WITH CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: STATE 203109

1. BY VIRTUE OF MY PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO NIGERIA (ALPIO ZORILLA MOZORRA), I HAD CONVENIENT OCCASION FOLLOWING THE ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE CLOSING CEREMONY THIS EVENING TO RAISE THE PUERTO RICAN QUESTION WITH CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER MALCIERA. (BEFORE DEPARTING LAGOS EARLY THIS AFTERNOON FOR LUSAKA WITH DAVID OWEN, AMBASSADOR MCHENRY HAD ASKED THAT I DO THIS IF I COULD APPROPRIATELY ARRANGE IT.)

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY PRESENTATION OF THE REASONS FOR OUR CONCERN, WHICH I DESCRIBED ALONG LINES SUGGESTED IN REFTTEL, MALCIERA SAID CUBA HAD OF COURSE TAKEN ACCOUNT OF THE "WIDER IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GENERAL AREA" AND CUBAN RELATIONS WITH OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WHEN IT INITIALLY PRESENTED ITS DRAFT RESOLUTION IN C-24. I SAID I NOTED WITH INTEREST HIS REFERENCE TO CUBAN RELATIONS WITH OTHERS SINCE I UNDERSTOOD
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CUBA ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROPOSED PANAMA CANAL TREATY. I SAID THERE WERE GROWING INDICATIONS THAT CONGR-
SSIONAL DELIBERATIONS ON THE
CANAL TREATY MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY THE DISCUSSIONS IN C-24.

3. TO ASSURE THAT WE UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER (WE WERE SPEAKING IN SPANISH), I ASKED MALCIERA WHETHER HE WANTED ANY CLARIFICATION

OF WHAT I HAD SAID AND WHETHER HE SAW THE LOGIC OF THE SUGGESTED LINKAGE BETWEEN WHAT CUBA WAS DOING IN C-24, CANAL TREATY PROSPECTS AND CUBA'S BROADER LATIN AMERICAN INTERESTS. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD ME, AND HE DID NOT ARGUE ON THE QUESTION OF LOGIC. WHEN I NOTED CARTER ADMINISTRATION ATTEMPTS TO ENLIST SUPPORT OF PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION LEADERS, HE REMARKED ON APPARENT NEED FOR SUCH SUPPORT TO BE ARTICULATED PUBLICLY.

4. MALCIERA THEN BROUGHT ALARCON, CUBAN U.N. PERM REP, INTO THE DISCUSSION, SAYING THAT ALARCON WAS THE EXPERT IN THE MATTER. ALARCON SAID THE CUBAN POSITION WAS NOT FIXED. NOT ONLY WORDING BUT ALSO PROCEDURE MIGHT BE CHANGED. HE FORESAW THE POSSIBILITY, FOR EXAMPLE, OF SOME SORT OF CONSENSUS RATHER THAN THE PRESENT FORMULATION. I SAID I ASSUMED THE WORDING CUBA MIGHT ACCEPT WOULD COME CLOSER TO CUBA'S PRESENT RESOLUTION THA THE WORDING OF THE PROPOSED NORWEGIAN DRAFT CONSENSUS STATEMENT. ALARCON SMILINGLY ASSENTED THAT THIS WAS A LOGICAL ASSUMPTION.

5. IN FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF WHAT WOULD SEEM TO BE A CLEARLY EVOLVING IF NOT FLUID CUBAN POSITION, ALARCON SAID HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD HAD A NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS ON THE MATTER IN THE PAST FEW DAYS IN LAGOS WITH COMMITTEE OF 24 CHAIRMAN SALIM SALIM, VICE CHAIRMAN VRAALSEN, AND ANOTHER COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN. HE INDICATED THAT CONVERSATIONS WOULD BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK IN NEW YORK. MALCIERA THEN ASKED POINT-BLANK WHETHER I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASK HIM TO ABANDON THE ISSUE COMPLETELY

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IN C-24, I SAID MY INSTRUCTIONS WERE NOT THAT PRECISE BUT I THOUGHT WE COULD LIVE WITH IT IF THEY DID THAT.

6. COMMENT: I WAS UNABLE TO CONTACT SALIM OR VRAALSEN PRIOR TO TALKING WITH THE CUBANS, AS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED IN PARAGRAPH 3 OF REFTEL. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER AMBASSADORS YOUNG OR MCHENRY DID SO. I HAD THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE RELEVANCE OF C-24 DISCUSSIONS FOR CANAL TREATY PROSPECTS HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY OCCURRED TO MALCIERA. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ALARCON. AUSTRALIANS HAVE TOLD US THAT SALIM DISCUSSED CANAL/PR LINKAGE LAST NIGHT WITH CUBANS, WHO TOLD AUSTRALIANS IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THE MATTER HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO THEIR ATTENTION. CONVERSATION WAS LOW KEY AND FRIENDLY, AND MADE EASIER BY FACT THAT MALCIERA AND I HAD BOTH SPOKEN FROM THE CONFERENCE ROSTRUM DURING CLOSING CONFERENCE SESSION. INTRODUCTION BY ZORILLA FURTHER FACILITATED OUR DISCUSSION. AT LEAST THREE UNIDENTIFIED ADDITIONAL CUBANS QUICKLY CLUSTERED AROUND, ONE OF THEM A TRANSLATOR WHOM WE BARELY USED.

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